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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PBTS](#) [UP](#) [RS](#)

SUBJECT: RUSSIAN-UKRAINIAN RELATIONS: BOTTOMING OUT?

REF: A. KYIV 1740 AND PREVIOUS

[B](#). MOSCOW 2412 AND PREVIOUS

[C](#). KYIV 1753

Classified By: Political Counselor Colin Cleary. Reasons: 1.4 (b/d).

[1](#)1. (C) Several high-level meetings in October suggest that the Ukrainians and Russians have decided to halt the alarming slide in their bilateral ties (refs A and B) and resume correct, if not yet warm, relations. Acting Ukrainian FM Khandogiy and Russian FM Lavrov, together with interagency delegations and representatives of oblasts in the border regions, met October 6-7 in Kharkiv, Ukraine. Contacts from the Ukrainian MFA and National Security and Defense Council (NSDC) who attended the Kharkiv sessions said that, although there were no breakthroughs, the atmosphere was businesslike and forward-looking. On October 9, Petro Poroshenko was confirmed as Ukraine's new foreign minister (ref C), and immediately set out to join the Ukrainian delegation to the Chisinau CIS Summit, which was already in progress.

[1](#)2. (C) Shortly after the Chisinau Summit, Ukraine and Russia announced that Poroshenko would travel to Moscow, which occurred on October 23. Oleksandr Bondarenko, Deputy Director of the First Territorial Directorate (which includes Russia) in the Ukrainian MFA, characterized the talks as substantive and frank, with agreement to continue meeting at high levels, and to activate the work of a number of the committees and subcommittees within the framework of the bilateral Russia-Ukraine Commission headed by the prime ministers of each country. Working groups that expect to meet in late 2009 or early 2010 include the Economic Committee, the subcommittee on the Black Sea Fleet, and the subcommittee on demarcating the maritime border. There are also supposed to be MFA consultations in December, and separate consultations on European security architecture. Bondarenko said the Ukrainian side was satisfied with Russia's explanation of its revised Law on Defense, the final text of which was reportedly "softened." He added that Ukraine underscored the need for Russia to observe all relevant Ukrainian laws while the Russian Black Sea Fleet is based in Sevastopol.

COMMENT

[1](#)3. (C) The willingness to meet at the ministerial level, as well as to rejuvenate the activities of various working groups, comes as a relief here, even if the thaw doesn't extend to President Yushchenko, who, the Ukrainians believe, was roundly snubbed by his Russian counterpart at the Chisinau Summit.

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